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**UNITED STATES ANNOUNCES INDICTMENT AND ARREST OF
LEADERS OF COLOMBIAN DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION
CHARGED WITH MOVING \$100 MILLION IN COCAINE AND HEROIN
INTO THE UNITED STATES**

*IN ADDITION TO ARRESTS, \$27 MILLION WORTH OF COCAINE AND HEROIN
DESTINED FOR THE UNITED STATES SEIZED IN PANAMA*

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today the unsealing of an indictment against the top leaders of a Colombian drug trafficking organization that imported more than \$100 million worth of cocaine and heroin into the United States. In addition, Mr. KELLEY announced the seizure of more than \$27 million worth of cocaine and heroin in Panama that was destined for the United States.

According to the Indictment, on July 21, 2005, Panamanian law enforcement, working with the United States Drug

Enforcement Administration (the "DEA"), seized 1,345 kilograms of cocaine and 15 kilograms of heroin -- worth a total of approximately \$27 million -- in Panama. The cocaine and heroin, which were destined for the United States, were seized from the arm of a large construction crane in a warehouse outside of Panama City, Panama, it was charged. Shortly thereafter, Panamanian authorities seized an additional 210 kilograms of cocaine from a separate stash location. On the same day the drugs were seized, Panamanian authorities, working with the DEA, arrested ALVARO ARDILA-ROJAS, a/k/a "Mickey," ANDRES CAJIAO-BARBERENA, a/k/a "Temo," and several other co-conspirators who were involved with the foiled drug shipment.

According to the Indictment, from 2002 through July 26, 2005, ARDILA-ROJAS, CAJIAO-BARBERENA, and others were members of an international drug-trafficking organization led by MANUEL FELIPE SALAZAR-ESPINOSA, a/k/a "Hoover" (the "Hoover Salazar DTO"). The Hoover Salazar DTO was allegedly responsible for the importation of multi-ton quantities of cocaine and kilogram quantities of heroin into the United States. The Hoover Salazar DTO coordinated the transportation of cocaine and heroin loads by sea, on board speedboats or "go-fast" boats, from Colombia to Panama, it was charged. After the cocaine and heroin arrived in Panama, the Hoover Salazar DTO secreted the drugs inside heavy construction machinery which was then transported by special

cargo vessels from Panama to Mexico. In Mexico, the cocaine and heroin were removed from inside the machinery and turned over to a Mexican drug transportation organization which transported the narcotics into the United States, including to New York City, it was charged. Between 2002 and July 26, 2005, the Hoover Salazar DTO transported more than 5,000 kilograms of cocaine, worth more than \$100 million, from Colombia to Panama to Mexico and ultimately to the United States, it was charged.

According to the Indictment, during the course of the conspiracy, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA led the Hoover Salazar DTO, directing all of its narcotics-trafficking activities and financial operations. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA was responsible for providing his co-conspirators with transportation routes used for shipping thousands of kilograms of cocaine and kilogram quantities of heroin from Colombia to Panama and Mexico for ultimate importation into the United States. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA led the operations of the Hoover Salazar DTO until his arrest in Cali, Colombia on May 23, 2005, it was charged. Since his arrest, however, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA has allegedly continued to make critical decisions regarding shipments of cocaine from jail and has delegated control of parts of the Hoover Salazar DTO to his co-conspirators.

From 2002 up to his arrest on July 21, 2005, ARDILA-ROJAS was a partner of SALAZAR-ESPINOSA and an investor in

shipments of multi-ton quantities of cocaine and kilogram quantities of heroin to the United States, it was charged. ARDILA-ROJAS was responsible for coordinating the transportation of the cocaine and heroin and negotiating the division of profits derived from the sale of those shipments. According to the Indictment, ARDILA-ROJAS also worked with SALAZAR-ESPINOSA to develop transportation routes used for the importation of these shipments of drugs from Colombia into the United States.

According to the Indictment, ANDRES CAJIAO-BARBERENA, a/k/a "Temo," was, until his arrest on July 21, 2005, the head of the Panama operations for the Hoover Salazar DTO. He was sent by SALAZAR-ESPINOSA to Panama to secure a warehouse where ton-quantities of cocaine and kilogram quantities of heroin were stored before the drugs were welded inside heavy construction machinery that CAJIAO-BARBERENA arranged to ship to Mexico, it was charged.

According to a previously-unsealed indictment, in addition to his narcotics trafficking crimes, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA was also responsible for laundering at least \$50 million in narcotics proceeds that were generated from the sale of cocaine and heroin in the United States. As discussed above, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA was arrested in Cali, Colombia on May 23, 2005, and his extradition to the United States is pending. The United States is also seeking the extradition of ARDILA-ROJAS and CAJIAO-

BARBERENA from Panama.

Mr. KELLEY praised the investigative efforts of the DEA, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the New York City Police Department, the New York State Police, and Panamanian law enforcement authorities.

The prosecution is being conducted by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys ERIC SNYDER and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in these Indictments are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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